

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

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USIA-06 SCCT-01 IO-10 OPR-02 ACDA-05 SAM-01 SAB-01

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P 291300Z AUG 75

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6005

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY CAIRO PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS PRIORITY

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY JIDDA PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 10955

DEPT PASS SECRETARY'S PARTY

E.O. 11652: XGDS2

TAGS: PFOR, PLO, XF

SUBJECT: 'ARAFAT'S VOICE FROM THE DEEP FREEZE

REF: BEIRUT 10682

SUMMARY: 'ARAFAT'S PRO FORMA ATTACK AUG 27 AGAINST PRO-
JECTED SINAI ACCORD DOES NOT RPT NOT ALTER OUR EARLIER JUDG-
MENT THAT PLO "MODERATES" BASICALLY RECONCILED, IF STILL
APPREHENSIVE, TO EGYPTIAN-ISRAELI AGREEMENT THERE. CONTI-
NUING, BY ALL ACCOUNTS, TO SKIRT DIRECT CRITICISM OF EGYPT,
'ARAFAT CALLED (IN IMPLEMENTATION OF AUG 16 CENTRAL COUNCIL
DECISION) FOR MOBILIZATION TO FOIL US-SPONSORED "SETTLEMENT".
HE IMMEDIATELY DEPARTED DAMASCUS FOR SAUDI ARABIA WHERE HE
HAS OPTION OF REMAINING SILENT UNTIL SINAI ACCORD FINALIZED.
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'ARAFAT WAS ADDRESSING REPS OF PALESTINIAN POPULAR ORGS, SOME

MEMBERS OF WHICH HAVE REPORTEDLY FALLEN UNDER INFLUENCE OF "REJECTIONIST" CANT, AND ELEMENTS HIS REMARKS (E.G., CALL FOR PALESTINIAN UNITY IN THIS TIME OF CRISIS) INDICATE THAT SPEECH WAS MOTIVATED PRIMARILY BY CONSIDERATIONS OF INTRA-PALESTINIAN POLITICS. WE CONTINUE BELIEVE 'ARAFAT WISHES MAINTAIN AND STRENGTHEN BOTH SYRIAN AND EGYPTIAN TIES, PARTICULARLY IN LIGHT OF HIS ALLEGED COMPLAINTS ON SYRIAN FAILURE TO BUDGE JORDAN ON QUESTION OF PLO PRESENCE IN THAT COUNTRY. EXCLUDED FROM CURRENT STAGE OF SETTLEMENT PROCESS, AND ARAFAT HAS NO SIGNIFICANT SUCCESSES TO SHOW FOR HIS AVOWED INTENTION TO STEP UP THE ARMED STRUGGLE AGAINST ISRAEL. WITH THE SECRETARY EXPECTED TO VISIT SAUDI ARABIA SHORTLY, WE HAVE NO DOUBT THAT HE IS SEEKING TO MUSTER SUPPORT THERE FOR PRESSURE ON USG TO DEAL HIM IN ON NEXT STEP TOWARD POLITICAL SOLUTION TO ARAB-ISRAELI PROBLEM. END SUMMARY.

1. 'ARAFAT HAS EXERCISED HIS OPTION (PARA 3, REFTEL) DURING A SPEECH AUG 27 BEFORE REPS OF PALESTINIAN POPULAR ORGS (STUDENTS, LABOR, JOURNALISTS, ETC), TO CARP AT THE TERMS OF EXPECTED SINAI ACCORD. STATING THAT ACCORD WAS ANTICIPATED, 'ARAFAT REPORTEDLY DECLARED THAT SURPRISING THING WAS EXTENT OF CONCESSIONS WHICH HAVE BEEN MADE TO ACHIEVE AGREEMENT AND ADDED THAT PLO OPPOSED THIS "SETTLEMENT" BECAUSE IT IS "AGAINST THE PALESTINIAN REVOLUTION AS WELL AS ENTIRE ARAB NATION AND WE MUST WORK TO FOIL IT." ALTHOUGH WE HAVE SEEN ONLY EXCERPTS OF 'ARAFAT'S REMARKS, SEVERAL BEIRUT PAPERS REPORT THAT A DECISION WAS TAKEN TO CREATE A "SPECIAL COMMITTEE" TO CONTRONT US MANEUVERS IN THE ARAB WORLD.

2. INTERESTINGLY ENOUGH, 'ARAFAT DELIVERED HIS BLAST ONLY AFTER MOST ARAB COMMENTATORS HAD CONCLUDED THAT SINAI AGREEMENT WILL BE FINALIZED IN NEXT SEVERAL DAYS AND THEN DEPARTED DAMASCUS ON AN UNANNOUNCED VISIT TO SAUDI ARABIA. THERE ARE NO INDICATIONS REGARDING THE LENGTH OF HIS INTENDED STAY IN RIYADH, BUT, IF HE CHOOSES, HE CAN PROBABLY REMAIN THERE AND POSSIBLY AVOID PRESSURES FOR FURTHER COMMENT FOR SEVERAL DAYS. WHETHER HE IS CAPABLE OF SUCH SELF-RESTRAINT REMAINS TO BE SEEN. IT IS ALSO NOTEWORTHY THAT 'ARAFAT, ACCORDING TO REPORTING AVAILABLE TO US, CONTINUED TO AVOID DIRECT ATTACKS ON EGYPT.

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3. COMMENT: WE SEE NOTHING IN 'ARAFAT'S DAMASCUS PERFORMANCE TO ALTER THE FUNDAMENTAL ASSESSMENT PRESENTED IN REFTEL. TIMING OF HIS REMARKS AND NATURE OF AUDIENCE TO WHICH THEY DIRECTED RATHER SUPPORT OUR CONCLUSIONS. HE HAS BEEN UNDER ATTACK FOR SOME DAYS FROM "REJECTIONIST" CIRCLES FOR HIS FAILURE TO TAKE THE LEAD IN OPPOSING SINAI ACCORD AND THESE SENTIMENTS HAD BEGUN TO TAKE HOLD IN SOME OF PALESTINIAN POPULAR ORGS (E.G., WRITERS AND JOURNALISTS UNION) TO WHICH HE ADDRESSED

HIMSELF. RELIABLE SOURCE WITH GOOD ACCESS TO PLO "MODERATE" LEADERSHIP TOLD EMBOFF AUG 25 THAT HAWKISH, IF NOT "REJECTIONIST", SENTIMENT AMONG PALESTINIAN "INTELLECTUALS" IS MATTER OF SERIOUS CONCERN TO 'ARAFAT AND HIS COLLEAGUES. IN CHOOSING TO LAY DOWN THE LAW BEFORE THEIR REPS, 'ARAFAT HOPED TO TAKE SOME OF THE STING OUT OF THEIR CRITICISM AND TO PROVIDE EVIDENCE, ALBEIT RATHER LATE IN THE DAY, THAT HE SERIOUSLY IMPLEMENTING CENTRAL COUNCIL DECISION (PARA 2(A) REFTTEL) TO MOBILIZE MASSES AGAINST "AMERICAN INITIATIVES".

4. CONCLUSION THAT 'ARAFAT SPEECH INSPIRED AS MUCH BY INTRA-PALESTINIAN CONCERNS AS BY HOPE OF DERAILING SINAI AGREEMENT IS BUTTRESSED BY 'ARAFAT'S REPORTED CALL, BEFORE SAME AUDIENCE, FOR "REJECTION" FRONT TO RALLY TO PLO LEADERSHIP "IN ORDER TO CONFRONT THE EMERGENCY SITUATION WHICH PALESTINIAN REVOLUTION IS FACING." 'ARAFAT DOES NOT EXPECT THIS CALL TO THE STANDARD TO BRING HIS REJECTIONIST CRITICS INTO LINE. RATHER, IT IS PROBABLE THAT HIS APPEAL FOR UNITY IN THE FACE OF COMMON DANGER WAS MEANT TO PLACE THE "REJECTIONISTS" ON THE DEFENSIVE AND REGAIN FOR HIMSELF SOME ROOM FOR MANEUVER. HE CAN ALWAYS TROT OUT THE FAILURE OF HIS ADVERSARIES TO RALLY 'ROUND THE FLAG TO DIS-TRIBUTE THE BLAME FOR THE PALESTINIANS' POOR PERFORMANCE IN CONFRONTING THE SINAI ACCORD.

5. REJECTIONIST-ORIENTED "AL LIWA QUOTED ARAFAT AS STATING THAT RECENT ARAB (READ SYRIAN) EFFORTS TO FOSTER RECONCILIATION BETWEEN JORDAN AND PALESTINIANS HAD BEEN "SPURNED" BY KING HUSSEIN AND THAT "JORDAN'S GATES REMAIN CLOSED TO US AS LONG AS PRESENT JORDANIAN REGIME CONTINUES TO EXIST." IF 'ARAFAT DID INDEED MAKE STATEMENTS ATTRIBUTED TO HIM. IT WOULD APPEAR THAT THEY BASED IN NO SMALL PART UPON READ-OUT PROVIDED BY SYRIANS FOLLOWING KING HUSSEIN'S RECENT VISIT TO SYRIA. WE BELIEVE SUCH CONCLU-CONFIDENTIAL

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SION WILL STRENGTHEN 'ARAFAT'S RESOLVE, ON ONE HAND, TO AVOID BREAK WITH EGYPT AND TO STRENGTHEN LINKS WITH DAMASCUS ON THE OTHER. NEGOTIATIONS FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF SYRIAN/PLO JOINT POLITICAL AND MILITARY COMMAND, WHICH MIGHT OFFER THE PLO A WINDOW ON THE DEVELOPING SYRIAN-JORDANIAN RELATIONSHIP, RESUMED AUG 28 IN DAMASCUS (FBIS NC281507Y).

6. AS REPORTED (BEIRUT 10883), BEIRUT PRESS REPORTED AUG 28 ARRIVAL OF ASHRAF MARWAN, PRES SADAT'S SPECIAL EMISSARY, BEARING MESSAGES FOR PRES FRANGIE AND 'ARAFAT. 'ARAFAT'S HASTY DEPARTURE FOR SAUDI ARABIA WAS INTERPRETED BY SOME BEIRUT COMMENTATORS TO BE MEANS OF SNUBBING MARWAN (AND ULTIMATELY SADAT). IT NOW APPEARS (ACCORDING TO FBIS NC282-125Y AND MARWAN'S STATEMENTS UPON ARRIVAL AT BEIRUT INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT) THAT MESSAGES BETWEEN SADAT AND 'ARAFAT

WERE IN FACT EXCHANGED IN SAUDI ARABIA.

7. AT THE MOMENT, 'ARAFAT AND HIS "MODERATE" COLLEAGUES ARE VERY MUCH IN THE DEEP FREEZE. THEY ARE FROZEN OUT OF THE CURRENT PHASE OF THE PEACE SETTLEMENT EFFORT AND PROBABLY THE EMERGING SYRIAN-JORDANIAN FRIENDSHIP AS WELL. TO DATE AT LEAST, 'ARAFAT HAS FAILED TO MAKE GOOD HIS PROMISE TO ESCALATE THE ARMED STRUGGLE EFFECTIVELY AGAINST THE ISRAELIS AND SOME COMPETENT LOCAL OBSERVERS BELIEVE THAT 'ARAFAT HAS DETERMINED TO MOVE OVER TO A DIPLOMATIC OFFENSIVE, WITH THE VISIT TO SAUDI ARABIA AS THE INITIAL STEP, IN ORDER TO GET BACK INTO THE GAME. WE BELIEVE HE WILL CONTINUE HIS LINKS WITH BOTH EGYPT AND SYRIA AND ARGUE VIGOROUSLY IN RIYADH FOR ARAB PRESSURE ON THE USG TO DEAL HIM A HAND IN THE VERY NEAR FUTURE. IT IS NOT YET CLEAR WHETHER THE JOURNEY TO SAUDI ARABIA WAS AT 'ARAFAT'S INITIATIVE OR THAT OF THE SAG (PERHAPS ALSO WITH EGYPTIAN ENCOURAGEMENT), BUT IT IS NOT WITHOUT RELEVANCE THAT THE SECRETARY IS EXPECTED TO VISIT SAUDI ARABIA AT SOME TIME IN THE NEAR FUTURE. IT SEEMS PROBABLE FROM THIS VANTAGE POINT THAT 'ARAFAT WILL SEEK--HIS AUG 27 BLEAT AGAINST THE SINAI ACCORD NOTWITHSTANDING,--TO HAVE THE SAUDIS USE THEIR LEVERAGE WITH THE USG TO PURCHASE SOME CHIPS FOR THE PLO "MODERATES".
GODLEY

NOTE BY OC/T: NOT PASSED.

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